PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION

The principle of brotherly love (chap. 8). Paul struck right to the heart of the matter in these preliminary verses by stating a basic principle: love is superior to knowledge (cf. chap. 13). People who are arrogant in their knowledge often find it hard to love. Lowery, D. K.

Because the acquisition of knowledge about spiritual things should ultimately lead to the benefit of other believers, Paul goes on to question whether the Corinthians really do have the knowledge they ought to have. The use of the verb dokeō ("thinks," GK 1506) generally has a negative flavor in Paul's writings (cf. 3:18; 10:12; Gal 2:2, 6, 9; 6:3; Php 3:4). Because certain Christians in Corinth are using their knowledge to vaunt themselves up rather than to build others up in love, they really do not have the knowledge they ought to have. True knowledge involves not merely knowing certain bits of data but living in a way that pleases God. If our knowledge does not affect the way we live in a positive manner, it is useless. Verbrugge, V. D.

A know-it-all attitude is only an evidence of ignorance. The person who really knows truth is only too conscious of how much he does not know. Furthermore, it is one thing to know doctrine and quite something else to know God. It is possible to grow in Bible knowledge and yet not grow in grace or in one's personal relationship with God. The test is love, which is the second factor Paul discussed.

Love (vv. 3–6). Love and knowledge must go together; "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). It has well been said, "Truth without love is brutality, but love without truth is hypocrisy." Knowledge is power and it must be used in love. But love must always be controlled by knowledge (see Paul's prayer in Phil. 1:9–11). The strong believers in the church had knowledge, but they were not using their knowledge in love. Instead of building up the weak saints, the strong Christians were only puffing up themselves.

It is here that love enters the picture, for "love builds up" and puts others first. When spiritual knowledge is used in love, the stronger Christian can take the hand of the weaker Christian and help him to stand and walk so as to enjoy his freedom in Christ. You cannot force-feed immature believers and transform them into giants. Knowledge must be mixed with love; otherwise, the saints will end up with "big heads" instead of enlarged hearts. A famous preacher used to say, "Some Christians grow; others just swell." Wiersbe, W. W.

Legalism thinks that it is all black or white, they live by rules rather than by the Spirit. They have exhaustive lists of do's and dont's. They are law controlled.

License is the opposite extreme. Like legalism, it has no gray areas. The group Paul is here addressing is most influenced by license.

Paul teaches them that it is wrong to offend the consciences of fellow believers when they do what is not necessary in service to the Lord. Paul warns, take care that your liberty does not become a stumbling block to others. Consider how your actions will affect other "weaker" believers.

These people were strong in self-love and weak in brotherly love. Knowledge of God's Word is extremely important, see Hoshea 4:6, the Bible places no premium on ignorance! But remember, knowledge makes arrogant. Paul calls the Corinthians "arrogant" no less than six times.

"The truly well-rounded Christian thinks and acts in two ways: conceptually and relationally." He has the ability to understand biblical truths and the ability to relate them to people, to himself, and to others.

"The truly edified person has some idea of what he has yet to learn. Someone has defined knowledge as 'the process of passing from the unconscious state of ignorance to the conscious state of ignorance.' Ignorance does not know that it does not know. True knowledge does not know and knows it" MacArthur

APPLICATION:
Love God, love others. JOY, Jesus first, others second, and yourself last. (Philippians 2:3-4; Hebrews 13:16; Romans 12:3)